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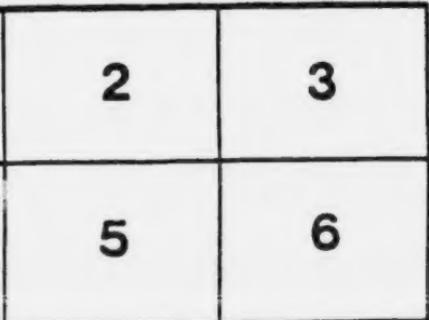
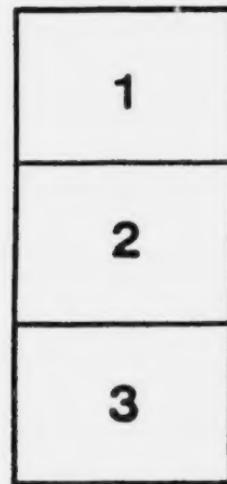
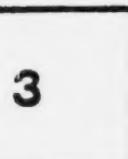
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1915-38

LABOR AND LIQUOR

*An Appeal to the Intelligence and
Legitimate Self-Interest of the Workers
of B. C.*

By W. D. BAYLEY

Labor Candidate in Manitoba Provincial Elections

Men of the Labor Movement.—It is a promise of a better day for the workers that our vote is being sought more and more as being the decisive factor in elections. It is also well that we are being asked to vote on measures as well as men, and on principles as well as parties. On September 14, you will be asked to record your approval or disapproval of two measures, viz.: Votes for Women and Provincial Prohibition. As Woman Suffrage was adopted by Labor years before old line parties took it up, there is no doubt about our attitude there. But on Prohibition there is not such unanimity of opinion. I therefore ask your best consideration of the following remarks.

Let us first warn you of the "double-cross" stunt. The liquor interests are parading as the friends of Labor as against Capital. When as a matter of fact the liquor trade is the meanest branch of Capitalism we have. Averaging it all around this trade employs one-quarter the number of men, pays one-quarter the amount of wages and uses one-quarter the amount* of raw material as the general average of capital invested in such business as clothing, shoes, lumber, etc. It outdistances, often many times over, all the ordinary lines of capitalistic enterprises in the percentage of profit reaped. It, therefore, ill becomes it to pose as a friend of Labor. Let us calmly examine (on the following pages) some of the "double-cross" arguments it urges.

Published by

PEOPLE'S PROHIBITION MOVEMENT

703 Rogers Building, Vancouver, B. C.

"Double Cross" Arguments of the Liquor Interests

1. Prohibition is a Capitalistic and Church Propaganda. It is true that both capital and church are increasingly supporting Prohibition. But the first temperance movements in England were among the trade unions who recognized booze as a foe of efficient organization. Capital and church are following our lead. Also remember that we do not oppose schools, hospitals, sewer and sanitary improvements, etc., etc., because capitalists are in favor of them. Some things are common foes to all, and liquor is one of them. And don't forget that the question before us is not the record of the church in regard to Labor, but the record of the liquor traffic. Shall we turn down a reform greatly to our benefit because some of our supposed enemies are for it also?

2. Prohibition Increases Taxation. Whether we believe workers pay all the taxes or none of the taxes, the argument is the same. The liquor trade in Canada costs us directly or indirectly about \$20 per head and pays in taxes \$2.50 per head. It takes \$8 for its useless product and returns \$1 in revenue. When we save the \$8 we can easily pay the \$1 in cash if necessary. But it won't be necessary. For law administration will be cut in two. In Winnipeg the police force and office staff are already being reduced by not replacing those who resign. And further, when we cease buying wet goods we will buy dry goods. The merchants of Seattle report large increases during six months of dry regime in the sales of clothing and shoes for women and children. Under our tariff system there is a duty on all these goods. Thus what is lost in liquor revenue will be made up in revenue on dry stuff. In Winnipeg, after one month of Prohibition (the same kind as the British Columbia Act provides) workingmen's homes are already showing signs of improvement. That means revenue from paint sales. And if those other lines do not replace entirely the revenue, the merchants won't mind paying \$1 in taxes if \$8 in business comes along with it. The government of Manitoba is not levying one cent extra in taxes on any kind because of the advent of dry weather.

3. This Act Interferes with Personal Liberty. Here the Liquor trade tries to swing our increasing jealousy of our liberty to their advantage. It is not personal liberty, but liberty with our purses they want. But we are too wise to fall for it. We know by experience that a man must surrender his personal liberty to work for low wages in order to secure the higher wages secured in the formation of a trade union. And so we must take away the personal liberty of greedy men to sell liquor and of selfish men to drink it in order that we may gain the higher liberty for our children of a sober country. This law is not the foe of liberty, but the defender of it. In May, Winnipeg police imprisoned 264 people for drunkenness, but in June under dry rule only 24. Was the act a foe of liberty? And it is the same act that you are asked to support on September 14.

4. This Act Means Unemployment. Usually in Winnipeg on Monday morning some 120 people were "unemployed" because they were in the lockup for drunkenness. But on the third Monday of Prohibition there was not a single prisoner there. They were all at work. The chief had to hire scrubbers to clean out. That made a few more jobs, didn't it? Capital turned from making booze will employ eight times as many men. An hotel in Brandon, Manitoba, surrendered its licence and the bar was replaced by a store employing seven times as many clerks as there had been bartenders. Soft drinks will replace hard drinks; bottlemakers will still be needed; breweries become pickle factories (that is, under Prohibition, they will pickle cabbage instead of cabbage heads). It takes more hands per capital invested to "can" tomatoes than to "can" humans. I personally offered to help the agent of the bartenders union in Winnipeg to find employment after we went dry, but he told us they were all fixed. He himself went back to his old

"Double Cross" Arguments of the Liquor Interests

job, the barbers' union. Practically all bar-tenders have another trade up their sleeve that they would be better at for all concerned, and they are practically the only class seriously put out by the passing of Prohibition.

5. This is Class Legislation. As Labor men we are after class legislation and the liquor interests figure on stampeding us on the bluff that this act makes a distinction between the rich and the poor. There is no such distinction in the act any more than there is in the present system which allows a rich man to buy expensive drinks and the poor man his beer. What they are trying to make out is that because this act allows importation into the home (see later on for discussion of that) that the rich can stock their cellars from a distance, but the poor cannot buy wholesale and pay express charges on bulky beer. Now, why is this the case? Not because the act discriminates against the poor man, but because he is poor. It is our POVERTY that cripples us. Poverty, not Prohibition, is our foe. Therefore let us fight our poverty. And we have as a Labor movement been trying to do so, first in the economic fight by unionism, whose final weapon is the strike, and, secondly, in the political arena by running Labor class candidates under various names. How have we got along in these efforts to reduce our poverty and what help did the liquor trade furnish us?

First, as regards the strike. Strikes fail often because of three reasons:

(a) Our savings play out. Did you ever know of a bar that, of its own free will, closed up during a strike to help us prolong the struggle? Or did they not rather, do a roaring trade while we were off work?

(b) Strike-breakers sometimes defeat our aims. In Winnipeg recently the teamsters struck for two cents an hour raise. Strike-breakers were secured in Montreal by getting men boozed first and then loading them on the train for Winnipeg. Figure it out, men. Does the booze business give you capable leadership, or does it help the foe?

(c) Strikes fail sometimes because violence by strikers drives away public sympathy and support. Does the open bar in strike-time make for lawfulness or lawlessness? The organizer of the recent teamsters' strike told me that the closing of the bars greatly increased the efficiency of their struggle and made its management much more satisfactory.

We conclude, therefore, that in struggling against poverty the bar is a hindrance, not a help.

Second, in the political field it is acknowledged everywhere that liquor is the chief agency for corruption. Dixon, the Single-Taxer of Centre Winnipeg, and Rigg, the Socialist member for North Winnipeg, were opposed most strenuously by the liquor interests. Only as the workers enter the political field clear-headed, well-organized and determined, will they get anywhere. Booze does not clear the brain nor strengthen the organization, nor stimulate the right kind of will power to win out against the exploiting interests of our land.

It is, therefore, plain that not the Prohibition Act, but the poverty of the worker creates the class distinction, and in our struggle to decrease poverty by the strike or by intelligent political action we are hampered at every turn by drunkenness. Given a generation of workers who do not booze and who give their spare time to the study of Labor progress in some of its forms, instead of the doubtful enjoyment of the bar-room and the interests of the working masses will be greatly forwarded in Canada.

6. And finally for this time, this is not Prohibition. Ye gods! The liquor men concerned for Prohibition! Just think of their heart-rending, pathetic appeals not to jeopardize Prohibition by passing this British Columbia Act. But to proceed:

Under the present law liquor for drinking can be had in three ways.

- (a) By the glass in a bar.
- (b) By the bottle in a store.
- (c) By importing it into your home from outside the province.

This so-called Prohibition Act proposes to cancel all the licences which the province of British Columbia has given for (a) and (b) of the above. This province has never given any one a licence to import liquor into the home, and therefore cannot take away that which it never gave, nor could give. The importation of liquor into a province is a matter of inter-provincial trade and by the terms of Confederation no provincial law can stop that. Only a Dominion Act can do that.

B. C. Prohibition Act is Strong Measure

The Privy Council of England declared the Manitoba Act was a good Act because it distinctly stated that it did not forbid importation. If that clause had not been there the act would have been beyond provincial powers. The B. C. Act has wisely followed the Manitoba Act along the safe road of constitutionality.

It is true that by reason of recent Dominion legislation the provinces are supposed to have received permission to forbid the importation, but that Act was not passed until the B. C. Prohibition move was on the way several months. And besides, the Doherty Act referred to has not itself been tested, nor do we know what it means. We do know that it was moved by those who were opposing the motion for total Prohibition for all Canada during the war. If, however, at any subsequent time the Doherty Act is proved of real value the Prohibition forces will be glad to back up the liquor men in having this B. C. Act amended to take advantage of the Doherty Act.

This is the fact—THIS BRITISH COLUMBIA ACT IS PROHIBITION TO THE LIMIT OF THE PROVED POWERS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA. TO HAVE INCLUDED IMPORTATION UNDER ITS CLAUSES WOULD HAVE BEEN TO RETAIN THE BAR AND THE SHOP BECAUSE THE ACT WOULD HAVE BEEN "ULTRA VIRES." (Ultra vires is the way a lawyer says it so he can charge \$5.00 for advice. It means "no good" in law.)

Do you really want TOTAL PROHIBITION? Vote for this Act on September 14, and then you strengthen the hands of temperance leaders to secure total Dominion Prohibition from the only place it can be secured, that is the Dominion House at Ottawa.

In a final word, the Labor movement has stood for Right things. It cannot afford to stand for the open bar-room. Winnipeg Labor gave a majority for this same Act. B. C. workers will do the same. Our hopes, our children, our better selves are all arrayed against the traffic in the depraved tastes of men and that profits in our undoing. Vote dry and refuse to accept responsibility for the continuance of the legalized traffic.





